

VZCZCXRO9228
OO RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #2812 3411548
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 071548Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5514
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 002812

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR R, A/S FRAZER, AND AF S/E NATSIOS
DEPT ALSO FOR AF/PD AND AF/SPG

E.O. 12958: DECL: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: CDA Addresses Darfur Crisis in Local Press

¶1. (U) In an interview with Arabic daily "Al-Sudani," the Charge d'Affaires addressed the Sudanese security apparatus' failure to stem the violence in Darfur, while also noting slight improvement in the humanitarian situation. The Charge noted that UN Security Council resolutions, such as Resolution 1706 on Darfur, serve as frameworks to guide policymakers, but are not always fully implemented. He also took issue with Sudanese President al-Bashir's contention that the deployment of UN forces constitutes a new form of colonialism. "Al-Sudani" published a brief preview of the interview on the front page of its December 7 issue and will publish the entire article on December 9.

¶2. (U) The interview, which was conducted December 4 by recent International Visitor Leadership Program ("U.S. Foreign Policy") alumnus Osman Merghani, also covered the status of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as well as a discussion on steps needed to restore normal bilateral relations. The independent "Al-Sudani" is one of the most widely circulated Sudanese Arabic dailies. It also has a sizable Internet readership in the United States and in the Arabian Gulf. The publication has been confiscated and suspended several times over the past two decades for taking anti-government positions.

¶3. (SBU) While in the U.S. in November, Merghani wrote several columns on issues such as democracy, accountability, and transparency in government. These writings angered pro-government columnists in Sudan. Some of his critics labeled him an "agent of the United States" for commending the virtues of the American political system while ignoring such issues as the detention of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and the abuse of Iraqi inmates in Abu Ghraib prison. Merghani has told us that he is writing up to 15 additional articles about his experiences in the United States.

¶4. (U) A translation of the "Al-Sudani" article from December 7 follows:

(Begin text)

Hume: Resolving the Darfur Crisis without UN Forces would be Magic
(article headline)

Ambassador Cameron Hume, the U.S. Charge d'Affaires in Khartoum, considers the plan presented by President Omar al-Bashir to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to deploy a Sudanese military force

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disappointing. He said the security situation has not improved. Senior high-ranking officers of the Sudanese officers have been lost without imposing stability. He further noted that the proliferation of arms in Internally Displaced (Persons) camps in Darfur has contributed to the deterioration of the security situation, and the targeting of women in particular. "I have seen the security situation in Darfur and I don't believe it is good at all," he said. However, he went on to say that the humanitarian situation has

slightly improved.

The Ambassador said in an interview with "Al Sudani" that the main part of the Sudanese government's plan put forward last September was to impose security through military means ... and it has failed.

I do not know how a political settlement could be achieved if the government continues to defy the Darfuri community and its leaders.

Ambassador Hume further refused to consider the AU's decision to extend its forces' mandate in Darfur for another six months would bypass the UN Security Council Resolution 1706. "Any resolution issued by the Security Council does not need to be adhered to 100 percent. ... Resolutions create a general framework," he said. He further pointed to 1967 Security Council resolutions 242 regarding the crisis in the Middle East saying that the resolution has not been implemented to the letter, but it has created a framework around which all diplomatic settlements in the Middle East have been based for decades.

The Ambassador further criticized President Al-Bashir's statements in which he stated that the deployment of international forces to Darfur is a new form of colonialism. The Ambassador further reviewed historical cases in which the UN has militarily intervened in Africa (Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia), and in South America, and in Cambodia in Asia. He said these cases proved that UN forces had not intervened for "colonialism or imperialism." Ambassador Hume said that the assumption that the problem of Darfur can be resolved without international troop intervention would be "magic."

(End text)

HUME